



MINNETONKA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

innovation yearbook 2018

The

**BIG
IDEA**



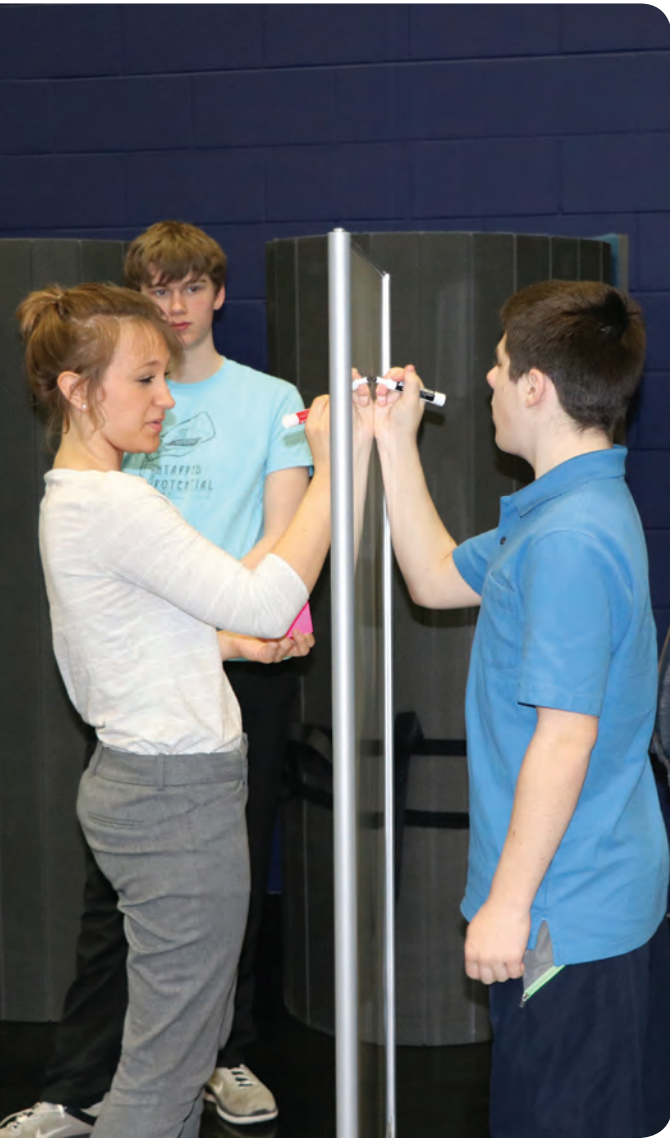
HUNT

MINNETONKA
INNOVATES

introduction

Eric Schneider
Associate Superintendent

The culture of innovation is
strong in Minnetonka!

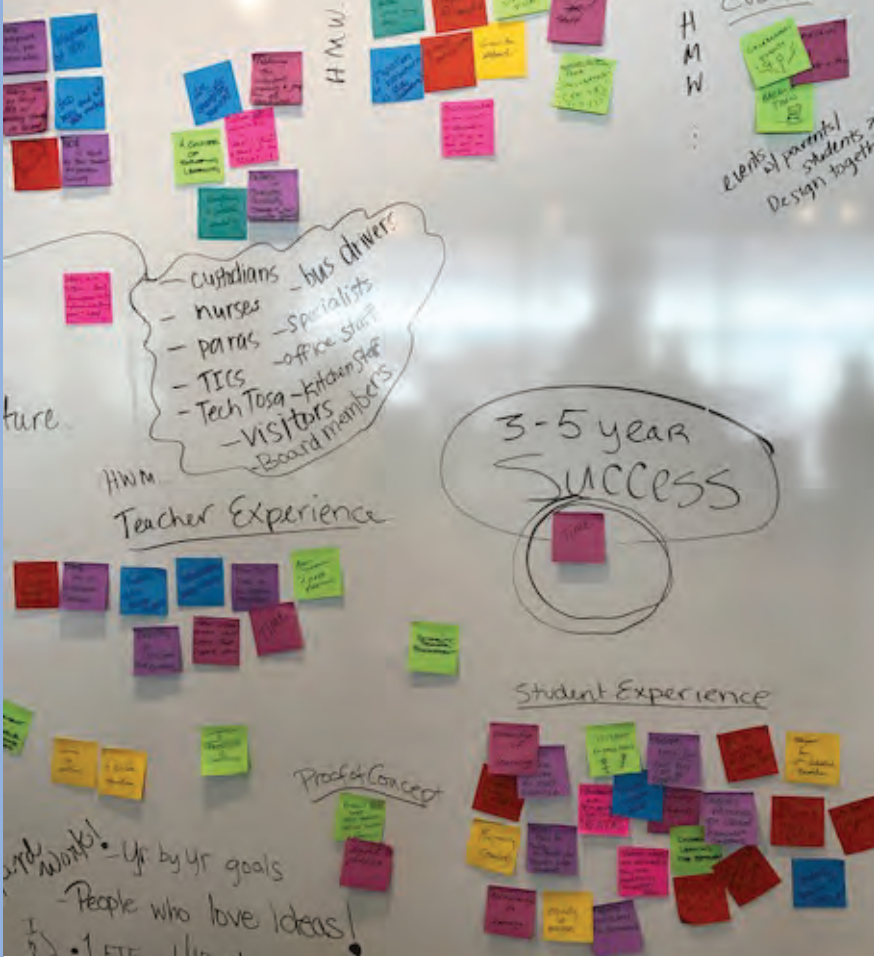


Welcome to Minnetonka Public Schools' 2018 Celebration of Leadership in Innovation! We call it our *Innovation Yearbook*, because it's a collection of the great stories from the 2017-18 year of innovation and the people who made it happen. It takes courage to submit an idea into our Big Hunt for Ideas event in the fall, and yet we receive well over 200 ideas every year. The culture of innovation is strong in Minnetonka, and it continues to get stronger every year. Please take a few minutes and reflect on the 2017-18 year with us, and join us in thanking the creative and courageous idea champions who have stepped forward this year to help us make Minnetonka a great place to live, a great place to work and a great place to learn!

perspective

Dr. Dennis Peterson
Superintendent

Through our structured approach to innovation, each of us is invited to invest in moving the District forward.



The District’s structured approach to innovation, through the Hunt for Big Ideas, demonstrates our commitment to giving every District employee a voice. Whether submitting an idea, voting on which ideas move forward or supporting planning and implementation, each of us is invited to invest in moving the District forward.

Education leaders around the country view Minnetonka a model for how to quickly turn ideas into high-impact opportunities for students. Some are very visible—like VANTAGE, Minnetonka Research or Tonka Online—others are smaller but make a difference in the lives of our students every day. Thank you to everyone involved in our important and ongoing innovation work.

Did you know?

In 2010, the Minnetonka School District set five goals: create a culture of innovation, launch an innovation website, use crowdsourcing to choose ideas, implement a “gaming” aspect and build a reward/ recognition program.

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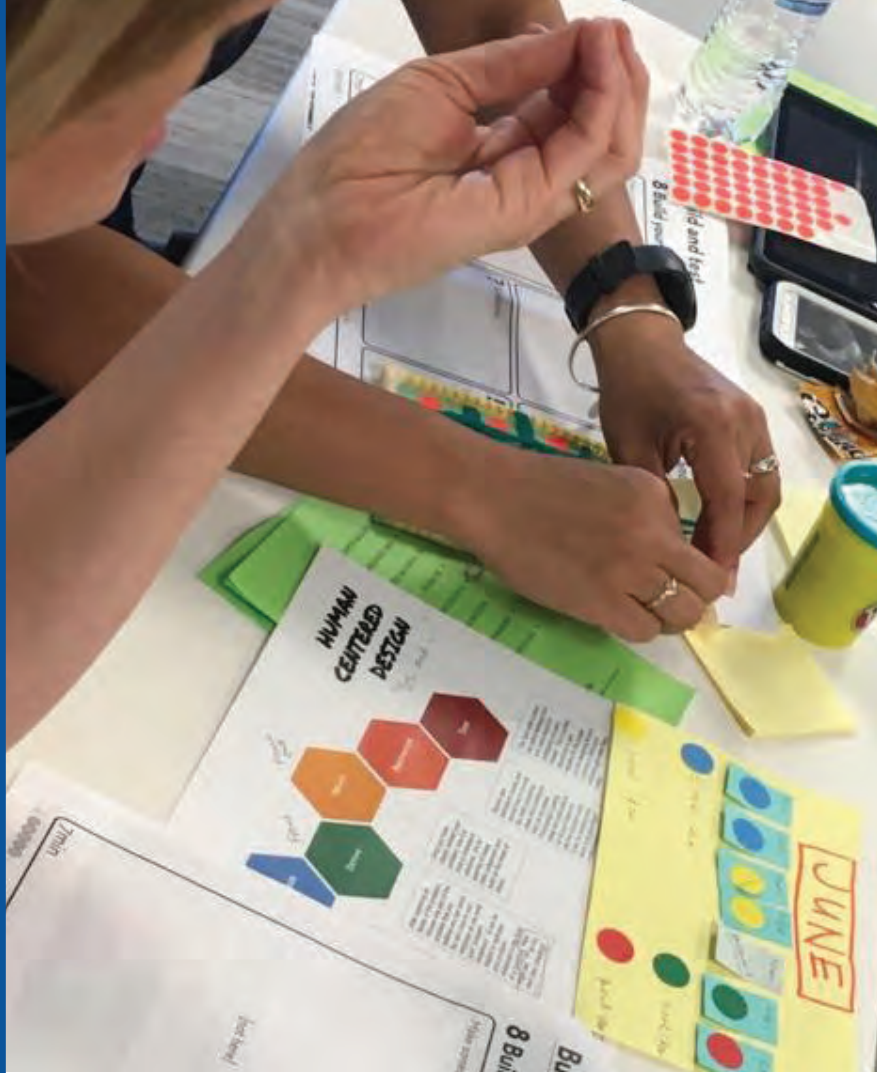
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teaching human- centered design

Nicole Snedden, District
Innovation Coordinator

The best ideas come
from understanding
users' needs and
gaining insight into
those needs.

David Kelley, IDEO



One of the greatest gifts we can give our staff and students is the ability to be creative problem-solvers in a complex and fast changing world. Human-Centered Design, an innovative process that includes, “building deep empathy with the people you’re designing for; generating tons of ideas, building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you’ve made with the people you’re designing for; and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world,” is one approach Minnetonka Public Schools has chosen to embrace in order to grow these problem-solving skills.

International design and consulting firm IDEO, founded by David Kelley, brought Human-Centered Design to life by stating the best ideas come from understanding users' needs and gaining insight into those

tools to solve problems quickly

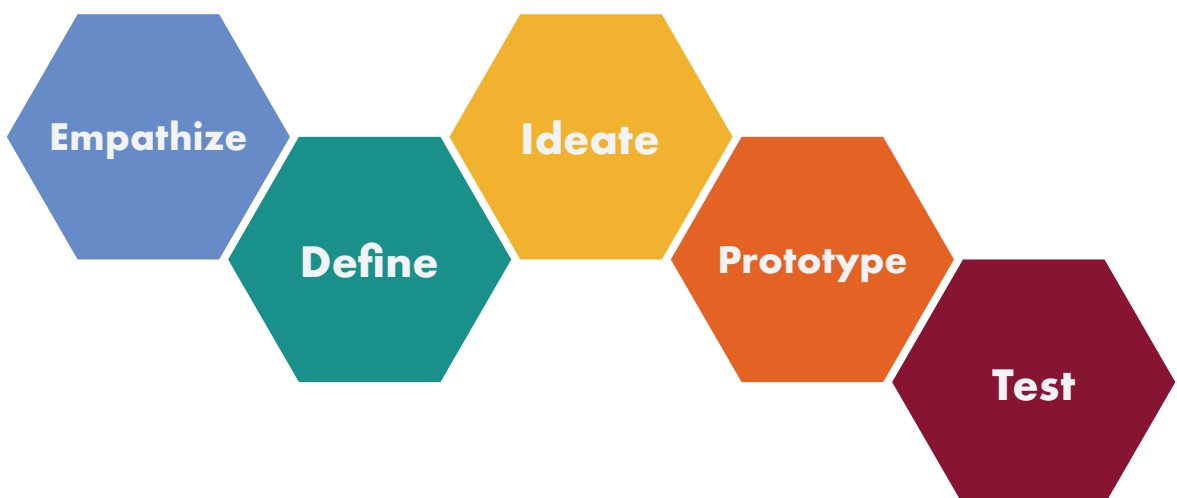
needs. When we embrace the belief that all problems can be solved and the people who face the problems are the ones who hold the key to the best solutions, something inspiring happens. We become more deeply invested in others' points of view, we work more collaboratively together, we think more critically and we have a stronger bias toward action to take risks and develop a prototype or solution for new possibilities. This is why Minnetonka Schools believes Human-Centered Design has such a powerful, impactful approach to learning. We are teaching what it means to truly empathize. We are giving our teachers and students the tools they need to feel empowered. For teachers, it evokes that passion to foster students' learning and to share that love with their students. For students, it gives them more tools to solve problems quickly and in a way that is collaborative, thoughtful, and inclusive.

In a recent article published by Educational Leadership, Carol Ann Tomlinson and Michael Murphy state, "When we set our compass "due north" to empathy, we humanize our work in schools."¹

Human-Centered Design has created a platform for staff and students to start with empathy, ask powerful questions, and push the boundaries of teaching and learning in Minnetonka. In our district, we can see examples each day of this growing movement in areas such as:

- Student Innovation Teams
- Classroom (Physics)
- Innovation and Strategic Planning
- Curriculum Design
- Design for Learning-Physical Spaces
- Systems
- Processes and Tools

¹ Tomlinson, C. A., & Murphy, M. (2018, March). The Empathetic School. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 20-27.



guiding team & innovation coaches

The Minnetonka Innovation Guiding Team (gt) is a group of thought leaders and educational designers who are innovators of their craft and committed to creating a sense of urgency around innovation in education. This team meets quarterly to problem-solve, offer feedback, storytell and explore how innovation is transforming students' lives in Minnetonka.

The role of the Innovation Coach (ic) is to provide energy and excitement to the face and voice of innovation in the district. Each school has a dedicated coach who builds positive relationships with staff through faculty meetings, after-school events and gatherings,



classroom visits, email communication and other forms of interaction. Innovation coaches also provide feedback, guidance and structure to staff at their site who submit ideas to Minnetonka's Annual *Big Hunt for Ideas* event, which takes place each fall. Coaches work primarily with small ideas from the hunt and carefully help navigate to get prototypes off the ground at their dedicated site. An emphasis on storytelling and providing opportunities for staff to develop their creative and innovative mindsets, is also an aspect of their work.

nicole snedden, innovation coordinator



eric schneider, gt



dave autio, gt



julie baeb, gt



matt breen, ic



lyssa campbell, gt



joe cossette, ic



tarah cummings, ic



greg hicks, gt



paula hoff, gt



paige koehnen, ic



michelle makres, ic



margaret mcdonald, ic



joel morris, gt



bhuvana nandakumar, gt



gina nelson, ic



belinda o'connell, gt



dave parker, gt



phil rader, gt



rebecca reynolds, ic



melissa streit, gt



jake sturgis, gt



jenny van aalsburg, ic



allison wachutka, ic



pam wertjes, ic

d.Team

The Innovation Design Team is a small, collective group of innovators of their craft, consisting of educators, consultants, and community partners who have a high level of knowledge in the area of Human-Centered Design and whose job is to grow the internal capacity of the District to incubate and accelerate new ideas. Similar to Innovation Coaches, d.Team members also work individually with staff, but focus on the medium and big ideas that are submitted into Minnetonka’s Annual Big Hunt for Ideas event. Using interpersonal skills, project management, lean start-up and rapid prototyping, these practitioners take ideas from proof of concept to scale. They work on helping staff district wide grow innovative mindsets and they support teachers with their craft in Design Thinking efforts.



julie baeb



matt breen



joe cossette



rebecca reynolds



robb virgin



pam wertjes



eric schneider



nicole snedden



amy altenburg



mike dronen



sara hunt



don pascoe



small ideas

Small ideas move easily from idea to prototype to test. Most require less than \$1,000 to implement and many require no financial outlay at all.

Minnetonka staff and idea champions take the lead in spreading proven ideas from building to building with the support of District leadership.

MCEC

preschool/pre-K

world's kindest district

Sarah Hennes

How might we develop a program where staff/students identify kindness when they see it in others? Our idea is to catch these acts of kindness and create a physical representation (such as a paper chain) to represent each act—and go for a world record! Sarah had initially proposed this idea as a districtwide event. She then created a plan to scale it for MCEC only.

Her idea is to create paper buckets which would have the act of kindness written on it along with student name. These would be chained together and hung through the hallways at MCEC. Students would receive a token, such as a bracelet, when caught in an act of kindness.

Next steps: Meet with Tim Litfin, MCEC Director, before the end of the school year to revisit the idea and share a sample bucket. The hope is to have the plan in place and ready to present to building staff in fall 2018 with the goal of putting up the paper bucket chain for fall conferences so that all families can see student success.

teaching strategy gold standards

Michelle Makres

Our idea was to encourage staff to display Teaching Strategy GOLD standards in their classrooms as a quick reference tool.

Posters were created for staff to use in the classrooms which outline levels of the GOLD standards based on age and curriculum area. Teachers have the option to post them in their classrooms.

kindergarten day-in-the-life

Sarah Hennes

Create “day-in-the-life” videos for incoming Kindergarten students to watch to help prepare for their fall start. The idea was linked to work being done by the district Communications Department. This idea is still in development.

3 - 4's: Literacy

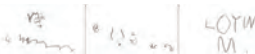
19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills


a. Writes name


- Controlled linear scribbles (2)
- Mock letters or letter like forms (3)
- Letter strings (4)

b. Writes to convey meaning

- Controlled linear scribbles (2)
- Mock letters or letter like forms (3)
- Letter strings (4)







3 - 4's: Literacy

onstrates Phonological Awareness

ces & discriminates rhyme

- Fills in missing rhyming word, generates rhyming words spontaneously - (4)

ces & discriminates alliteration

- Sings songs & recites rhymes & refrains with repeating initial sounds (2)

ces & discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound

- Hears & shows awareness of separate words in sentence (2)


onstrates knowledge of alphabet

tifies and names letters

- Recognizes and names a few letters in own name (2)
- Recognizes as many as 10 letters, especially from name (4)

s letter-sound knowledge

- Identifies sounds of a few letters (2)



13

small ideas

“The Clear Springs Site Innovation Team is focusing on bringing Responsive Classroom to the lunchroom experience.”

- Jim Plazik

Clear Springs

k-5

calm cafeteria

Jim Plazik

This idea is a merger of “Appetizing Acoustics,” “Quiet Lunch Space,” and “Calm (Not Chaotic) Lunch.” Each of these ideas addressed a different aspect of the noise problem in the lunchroom. Our site innovation team has defined the problem as, “how might we create a calm lunchroom experience?” The Clear Springs Site Innovation Team is focusing on bringing Responsive Classroom to the lunchroom experience.

This includes:

- Responsive Classroom training/ meetings for playground and lunchroom paras
- Developing slides outlining school lunchroom/recess expectation for teachers to discuss with students
- Looking at ways to strengthen the relationship between students and recess/lunchroom paras

brain chew

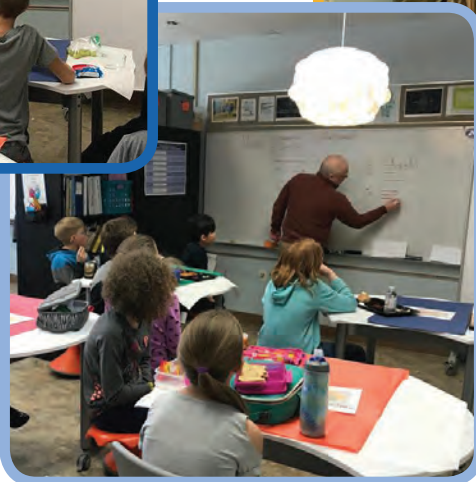
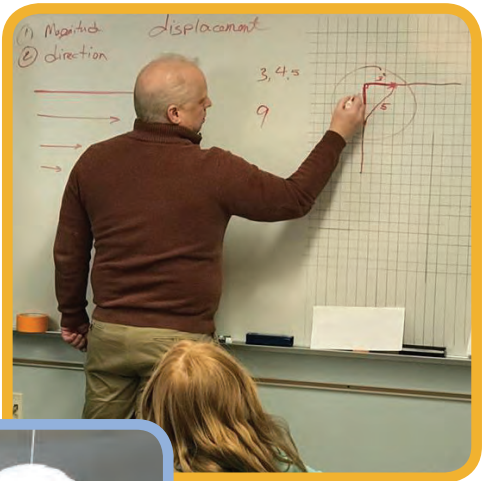
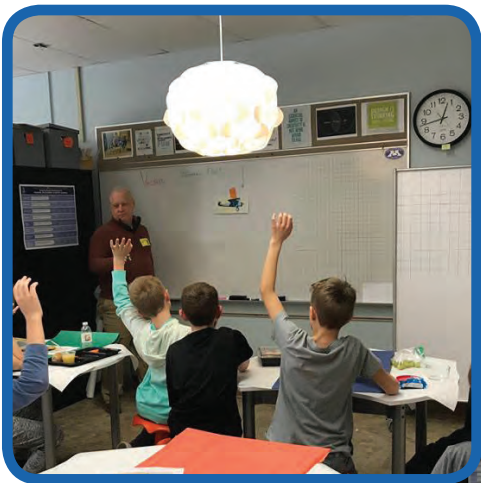
Heather Totin and Joan Larson

Brain Chew started from an earlier “Idea Hunt” idea, D.E.C.K.

D.E.C.K found that we have a great resources of community experts willing to share their knowledge and passion with students. Separately, they knew of the loud lunchroom problem, and wanted to find a way to give students a quiet place to eat (and learn!) Putting

those two components together, Brain Chew evolved by using our community experts to teach and discussion a small group lesson to students during their lunch period.

In March, the first Brain Chew event took place. The first topic was Vectors, attended by fourth and fifth graders, and presented by Tim Nelson. The next Brain Chew event will take place in May on the water shed.



brain chew

small ideas

Deephaven

k-5

calm (not chaotic) lunch

Rebecca Reynolds

It is no secret that the lunchroom is a very loud, chaotic and stimulating place to be. All of this noise, stimulation and chaos is very disturbing to our special needs population at school. Due to the sensory overload, multiple students are not eating in the lunchroom on a daily basis. These students are often those who need social interaction the most.

The over-stimulation is too much for regular education students as well. Many students cannot facilitate social interactions due to the sensory overload. How might we create a quieter lunchroom environment to meet all student needs? Alongside a teacher, a team of students made a video to show expected behavior for the lunchroom, beginning with entering the building from recess to lining up to return to their classrooms.

Deephaven used the Responsive Classroom strategies of clear expectations, interactive modeling and practice to set the students up for success. Every grade level has practiced the routine and continues to review the expectations using the video as well as reminders, reinforcing and redirecting language.



mastering the art of scheduling

Rebecca Reynolds

The Deephaven Master Calendar was not easily accessible for all staff to know what is going on each day, week and month. How might we more effectively communicate dates building-wide? The Google Calendar is built and is currently being updated with important dates for staff to know. The calendar will be readily available for the upcoming school year.

adopt a hallway

Rebecca Reynolds

The hallways seems to “collect” items over the course of the year. In the fall and spring, there is an abundance of papers and pencils. In the winter, there are gloves, hats and random boots. If a class or two “adopts a hallway,” they can learn to problem solve by finding their own items, preventing the lost and found from overflowing and helping students take ownership over their school. How might we empower students to take care of the hallways? Encourage classrooms to adopt a hallway, where students/classes can monitor and clean the hallways in which their classrooms exist. A pair of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers have been piloting this idea with their students. The idea is still in motion.

how to prepare reserves well

Deephaven third-grade team

Reserve teachers need sufficient time to adequately prepare for the day and fewer minutes at the end of the day to wrap it up. How might we more adequately prepare reserves for a full day of teaching? The Deephaven Reserve folders now have three different times from which the reserves are able to choose for a full day: 7 a.m.-3 p.m., 7:15 a.m.-3:15 p.m., 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

kindergarten curriculum night before school starts

Brennen Dickenson

The sooner curriculum night is held, the earlier teachers can answer questions for parents and can accomplish even more for their students. The goal is to start curriculum night before school starts so kindergartners can prepare before multiple students are at school and parents can get their questions answered. How might we more effectively communicate the curriculum to Kindergarten parents? The Kindergarten teachers piloted this in Fall 2017 and it was successful. They plan to do the same in Fall 2018.

small ideas

“Students created a brief video to share classroom procedures with reserve teachers so that they felt welcome, comfortable, and confident during their workday in the classroom.”

- Heather Baker

Excelsior

k-5

yearbooks for teachers

Tim Ketel

Tim enjoys having a copy of the yearbook each year and students enjoy looking through the yearbooks in his classroom from years past. However, it is a lot to ask teachers to pay \$25 of their own money each year to get a copy. PTO agreed to fund this. One yearbook for every classroom teacher and specialist! We will get them in June.

student welcome video for substitute teachers

Heather Baker

In Project Think, Heather had some fifth graders brainstorm problems that needed solving in their classrooms. One idea was that substitutes didn't know the procedures, hand signals, etc. for the class. These students created a brief video to share with substitute teachers so that they felt welcome, comfortable and confident with the procedures in the classroom when they were in a new space. There was a plan to roll this out to other classrooms, but those plans are still in the works. Next fall we will push for all classrooms to create this video.

flipped staff meetings

Tarah Cummings

Sitting in a staff meeting and hearing teachers present new ideas that needed processing and then asking for questions struck me as inefficient.

Teachers need advance time to process new ideas so they can come to meetings with questions prepared. I suggested the idea of creating videos in advance, asking staff to watch them before the meeting and then having staff come to meetings prepared to ask questions. We tried it a few times and encouraged teachers to flip their agenda items. However, most teachers were reluctant to record themselves. It is also difficult to say how many teachers actually watched the flipped items. More kinks need to be worked out and we need to get used to this model before I could say it was successful.

adopt a hallway

Liz Gluck

Our hallways were looking messy and didn't instill pride in students or staff. Having students/classes take responsibility for hallways teaches valuable executive functioning skills and encourages teamwork and pride in our spaces.

Classrooms all over the school have signed up to Adopt-a-Hallway. There are signs posted. In addition, Principal DeCorsey added the "Golden Boot" incentive as well. Weekly, a class wins a spray-painted golden boot to display in their classroom to celebrate their clean hallway. Then it is sent on to the next class that wins the following week.



Groveland

k-5

small ideas

marker recycling

anonymous

Wouldn't it be great if there were a free way to prevent markers, dry erase markers and highlighters from ending up in the landfill? A student informed us that Crayola will accept all brands of plastic markers. That includes dry erase and highlighters! A program was set up in mid-February with information sent home to families in the school newsletter.

Kindergartners and their fifth-grade buddies introduced the program to each classroom with a short presentation and demo which markers could be recycled, what the collection boxes looked like and their locations. So far, we have sent two boxes per week to be recycled. We are tracking the number of boxes sent to Crayola.



shake it off for safety

anonymous

This idea started when staff were noticing how students were dripping water all over the floor after washing their hands, thus creating hazardous bathroom floors.

How might we create a safer environment for students who are using the restrooms as well as those who are in the hallways near the restrooms? Paper towel dispensers were relocated in one bathroom to make the trip from the sink to the paper towels to the trash can more efficient. Currently, there is far less water on the bathroom floor and less trash on the floor, too. Hopefully less slipping will result.



small ideas

Minnewashta

k-5

virtual learning for advanced students using Google Hangout

Joy Curran

Using the technology we already have in place, why not have advanced elementary students connected to the middle school class? This idea has been in implementation throughout much of the school year, with a fifth-grade math student participating in a middle school math class at MMW via Google Hangout. Currently, we're surveying staff involved to get their thoughts about effectiveness of the process. Anecdotal feedback, thus far, is all positive from staff, the students (both the fifth grader and sixth graders) and the child's parents. We will also look at NWEA data for this student to assess the impact on scores.

fourth-grade math support

Clare Miller and Amanda Zamilpa

This idea was a recent suggestion to support fourth-grade math students who could benefit from an added boost in practice/support. The overall idea is to provide a before-school, twice per week option for six weeks, to help students have more success in math class and on upcoming high-stakes assessments. A secondary goal is to boost confidence in math skills. The idea was approved by the principal and staff were identified to lead the sessions. Permission emails are scheduled to go out to identified students' parents on Friday, April 13, with sessions to start the following week.



maker space or bust!

Tami Junkermeier

This idea is for an after-school Makerspace Club for grades 1-5, lasting 4-5 weeks. Students would be introduced to all areas of The Hub and participate in at least one activity in each Hub area. Through this class, students are able to work with robotics and coding, create electrical circuits, design and build cardboard arcades and creatively use a variety of artistic materials to make something unique. The Makerspace or Bust! classes started in November and went through March, with grades 1-5 each having a six-week session. Students enjoyed the opportunity to creatively engage with technology and materials to innovate and address real world problems. Look for more Makerspace or Bust! opportunities next school year, too!

curriculum night online

A few years ago, an idea was submitted to the hunt to hold curriculum night online. The goal was to meet families where they were, and to provide resources electronically, so they could be revisited. The idea has been piloted for two years by second-grade teachers at MWA. After several meetings this year, there are mixed thoughts from staff about the model. Those in support appreciate the use of technology as a resource that's always available for families. The primary concern of those not in support are the missed opportunity to connect with families face-to-face. We conducted a survey of families who have participated. Results were extremely favorable of an online curriculum night experience. The one "negative" reported was the missed opportunity for them to connect with each other. They weren't as concerned

about connecting with the teacher, as they reported they wanted to see and talk with other parents. At this point the innovation coach will bring the idea forward to district innovation leadership to ascertain a next step. If this is an avenue the district would like to pursue, we believe the decision is bigger than our staff/school.

kindergarten curriculum night

Jen Watson, Lisa McHugh, Amber Quinn, Carly Brown, Christina Velasquez, Jessica Marcantonio, Hannah Penning

This idea originated outside the Hunt, through conversations about the unique needs of Kindergarten families. Generally, there are more school/district-related things to tell them, for the first time, than what happens for families who have been in our schools for any length of time. The group has met with the innovation coach several times to talk through current practices and needs that are important to address during Curriculum Night or other back-to-school events. We brainstormed options that may be a better fit for helping our families feel connected and get all of their initial questions answered in a timeline that works well for them. We also looked at times, as evening curriculum night times are difficult for families, right at the start of the school year and especially for families of young children. The plan is to move the Kindergarten Curriculum Night to 4:00-4:45 p.m. on the day before our school open house. This will get families into the school/classroom earlier than a mid-September curriculum night and, we hope, will alleviate some of the questions or frustrations that families have expressed over the years.

small ideas

"I am working with two sound technicians from the Guthrie Theatre to discuss acoustics and ways to reduce noise in the Scenic Heights hallways."

- Sandy Katkov

Scenic Heights

k-5

hallway acoustics

Sandy Katkov

This idea has been "cooking" for a few years. The acoustics in the hallway are challenging, sound bounces everywhere, the slightest voice can be heard inside the classroom and the hallway is used by every classroom in the building as they go to art class and recess. As of this spring, the project is on hold.

I am in contact with The Guthrie Theater and working with two sound technicians from there. With the new gymnasium addition being built the summer of 2018, I have delayed this project until the fall of 2018.

printing from Chromebooks

Ali Wachutka

We wanted students and staff to be able to print from Chromebooks. Now we can! It doesn't always work perfectly, but we have a process!



how might we make stormy weather easy and calm?

Lisa Fellabaum

The initial idea was to have students wait in classrooms and use the news to communicate when PPU rides are here. Currently all kids and classes go in the hallways, some parents walk in, some pull up and at the end we all end up in the atrium.

Since our idea was submitted to the Hunt we learned that the school had previously used the system we were proposing and our current system was the improvement. The school preference is to keep the current system.



small ideas

“We’re brainstorming and scavenging for technology resources to create a viable lean test for the mobile wireless printer idea.”

- Sara Hunt

MME & MMW

Minnetonka Middle Schools East and West

mobile wireless printer

Sara Hunt

Students and teachers periodically need to print documents for class. The problem is that for students to print they need to go to the Media Center to log into a computer, print and then go back to class. Learning opportunities are lost due to this time away from the classroom. How might we provide opportunities to print more flexibly?

Since the idea started, Sara Hunt has worked on brainstorming and scavenging for tech resources to create a viable lean test. Working closely with the field technician, we have been exploring options that are viable within our system. The test hasn't run yet.

pop-up recording studios

Sara Hunt

Students are showing what they know in new and creative ways all the time using their iPads. Students are recording video and sound in a variety of ways. They are always striving to get better-quality recording from their iPad. How might we provide recording space options for students? We have purchased three different greenscreen tents and one microphone to test. They have been tested in several classrooms for greenscreen projects so far.

“SKIP” time students keeping it productive

Laura Rosati

This idea actually began three years ago with the idea of MAST in the middle school (the original idea came from MHS Principal Jeff Erickson). The idea was extremely well received in the Hunt for two years in a row; however, we struggled to find a way to implement it and provide the opportunity to all students during the school day. Fast-forward to this year. Laura Rosati, with the help of the Student Support Services team, came up with the concept of SKIP time—which would be an in-school time for all students at the same time. This would replace the IP time. It is being implemented at both Middle School East and West. We began a trial with two dates and now it is scheduled through the rest of the year. We even have an app that we are working on developing (right now it only has the current schedule). The students love it and the teachers do, too. It is difficult to implement during testing season as it shortens classes. But it also provides core teachers with more instructional time as they now do not have to participate in the IP or STOP day schedule.

iPad charging stations for students

Else Goll

Students are coming to school having forgotten to charge iPads overnight and battery levels get low throughout the day. Rather than having an iPad that needs to repeatedly be plugged in throughout the day, students could take advantage of getting a more significant charge during a period where it isn't required. How might we provide an opportunity for students to charge their iPad during the day? iPad chargers are available for students to use during lunch time and they can plug in their iPad during lunch in a monitored room.

found it!

Michelle Brunik

Students often accidentally leave their belongings in the classroom, bathroom, Media Center and lunchroom. It's hard to find time to go digging through the lost and found. Sometimes the thought of the item not being there is enough to deter students from looking. How might we organize the lost and found into a digital platform to allow students to search for lost items? The MME Coder's Club has been working on a prototype for a "lost and found app." It is currently being created by students.



small ideas

MHS

Minnetonka High School

MHS Google event calendar

Sara Martinson

At the high school, we have many activities that take students out of classes. Currently, staff receive Outlook invitations to remind them of these events and the staff handbook also lists the events and activities that affect significant numbers of students. However, there's not a "quick reference" that offers a good visual overview that can assist teachers, advisors and administrators when scheduling activities.

As a pilot, a couple different calendar formats have been created to get feedback from other teachers. It is the hope that a more visual and complete events calendar will provide people with the information they need to avoid overloading certain students. This common resource will also be valuable as a reference when teachers are trying to plan for student absences throughout the year.



give us a break

Claire Harley

We have a lot of students in our building and a six-minute passing time just doesn't suffice between class periods. An extended passing time of 12 minutes between second and third period would allow more time for students to use the bathroom or get snacks, as necessary.

The high school will pilot a modified schedule with this extended passing time in the fourth quarter to collect data for possible implementation during the 2018-2019 school year. Based on the student and staff response to this pilot schedule, it is possible that full implementation may require additional resources to meet the needs of the students during this time.

Extended Passing Time Schedule:

First Hour: 8:00-8:55

Second Hour: 9:01-10:01

Extended Passing Time: 10:01-10:13

Third Hour: 10:13-11:08

First Lunch

Lunch: 11:08-11:38

4C Class: 11:44-12:39

5C Class: 12:45-1:40

Second Lunch

4B Class: 11:14-11:42

Lunch: 11:42-12:12

4B Class: 12:12-12:39

5C Class: 12:45-1:40

Third Lunch

4A Class: 11:14-12:09

Lunch: 12:14-12:44

5C Class: 12:45-1:40

Fourth Lunch

4A Class: 11:14-12:09

5B Class: 12:15-12:43

Lunch: 12:43-1:13

5C Class: 1:13-1:40

Fifth Lunch



Jeff Erickson @TonkaPrincipal · Apr 17

Tonka...

We tested "Extended Passing Time"

Thoughts?

DM for additional comments.

72% Study further

28% Do not study further

medium ideas

Medium ideas require more time and effort to ideate, prototype and test. Idea champions work with the Design Team and building administrators to create and execute a formal plan.

Typically, medium ideas require an investment of \$1,000 to \$5,000.

SOS - mental health strategies

Martha Sepulveda, elementary medium

Over the last couple of years, we have had more students who require mental health resources. Teachers need to know what to do when a mental health situation arises (anxiety, depression, etc.) because not all teachers are trained in it. I propose providing teachers the theory and practical tools (activities, strategies, and techniques) that can be applied to help students in the classroom to improve their experience.

During our first meeting, we classified different ideas for a pilot program, proposing to provide a group of teachers with a toolkit to help students with mental health issues.



MINNETONKA
INNOVATES

medium ideas

cool it, man!

Andy Potter, elementary medium

During the months when the temperature outside pushes above 80 degrees, or when the humidity outside is 70% or more, the conditions in the classroom for learning are not optimal. The number of behavior-related incidents increases, work production decreases and it is generally not a fun learning, or teaching, environment. Students are expected to take NWEA tests, MCA tests, etc., on days when the temperature in the classroom has us all sweating and generally feeling uncomfortable. Our students could perform so much better and behave much better if they weren't sweaty, tired and uncomfortable because of the temperature and humidity in the classroom. How might we help students be more successful during the warmest days of the year? After gathering colleagues' input on the prototype that was set in place, it was decided to not move forward with this idea.

flexible learning spaces

Dr. Paula Hoff, middle school medium

As our schools become more focused on learning experiences designed around The Minnetonka Framework, our spaces for learning need to become more flexible, adaptable and plentiful!

How might we provide more flexible learning spaces for our students? Since our start we have completed a lean test, leveraging media center and borrowed furniture in targeted areas. We created a Google Form to collect data from students as they were working in those spaces. From the data collected, students, paraprofessionals and staff reported lots of positives to having flexible furniture in spaces close to their classrooms to be able to easily flow between classroom and hallway.



medium ideas

let's take it outside

Mandie Wilder, high school medium

Having well-planned and intentional outdoor classrooms or learning spaces could help increase productivity, innovation and creativity in staff and students. Since the idea workshop, work has been done to provide a space in the MHS courtyard garden that teachers can check out through their Outlook calendar like they do to reserve laptop carts. To help build an environment that is more flexible to different lesson styles, the pilot of this idea will include a portable whiteboard, folding chairs and standing tables.



homework stress

Laura Rosati, middle school medium

What stresses our students out the most? Homework! We know students need IP (Independent Period)/STOP Time each week. However, the cost is that each core subject must give up at least eight instructional days to provide students with an hour each week for a time to just GET 'R DONE. We have tried to find a way to implement a MAST-like schedule, but for scheduling reasons, this is not viable. We need to find a way for students who are already attending classes to have a deliberate weekly time for IP or STOP days at the middle level. In lieu of IP or STOP days, we will go to a shortened schedule in all classes and have SKIP Time built into the slot between sixth and seventh hour that is to be used exclusivity for IP/STOP activities.

All students and teachers will be involved at the same time. How might we help students manage their school work and life so that they can have less stress? Since the idea went into the Hunt, it has been tested twice at MMW and MME and has been implemented at both schools every other week for the rest of the school year. This test has proven successful and will be discussed for future planning for next year.

sensory room

Michelle Brunik, middle school medium

Michelle recognized that MME students with sensory needs (particularly those with autism) don't have a safe place to go during the school day to release pent-up emotion or fulfill a sensory need in their body. She was inspired by a sensory room video on Edutopia where students can swing, fall safely on crash mats, hit a punching bag, engage with a sensory light wall as well as other tools and equipment. By meeting these sensory needs and engaging with these tools, students can release negative emotions, calm their bodies and ultimately be ready to learn. During the Idea Workshop in February, the participating team of staff discussed the wide variety of student emotional and sensory needs that distract from teaching and learning in the classroom.

Student needs vary: Some students are outwardly struggling with anxiety/stress, autistic students need a sensory outlet to help provide focus and other students just "need to get the wiggles out." Ultimately, the problem was defined as, "how might we provide general ed staff with tools and education on meeting student emotional needs (both sensory and anxiety)?" Michelle is currently testing two prototypes with her students. The first solution, designed with all students in mind, is using the "Calm" app at the start of class. "Calm" is a free resource for teachers which Michelle shares with the entire class via her Smartboard. The app guides

Michelle and her students through a simple breathing exercise that takes just a few minutes. The second prototype, designed for students who might benefit from physical movement—are circuit stations set up in a vestibule outside of Michelle's classroom. These stations will include quick, simple exercises like holding plank for so many seconds, bouncing on an exercise ball, jumping rope, or other activities that encourage movement and provide students with a way to release pent-up emotion and/or safely meet sensory needs with minimal time away from classroom activities. Student feedback is being gathered on both prototypes this spring.

dean of students

Kate Ohrt, middle school medium

With the increasing number of students at both middle schools, it continues to seem as though our administration could use a 3rd member of "the team" at each building to assist with student/staff logistics, culture, climate, testing and scheduling.

How might we provide more support for students and building administration to build a positive school culture? Since the workshop, Sara Hunt researched and met with administration to discuss the current School Climate Paraprofessional role. This role is in its first year and will continue to be evaluated and discussed.

let's go Google

Sara Hunt, high school medium

We as a district spend time and money building and supporting our district server that stores all of our P: and S:drive electronic resources. We need to take this opportunity to be innovative in how we focus our resources and time to support the all the different programs and technologies our teachers need and want. This would allow teachers to work out of a single virtual environment, having easier access to resources outside of our schools. These ideas led to a “how might we” statement that was focused on supporting and training staff in the use of Google storage capabilities. Since the meeting, idea champion Sara Hunt has connected with multiple teachers, primarily at the elementary level, to encourage them to consider moving items from their P: or S:drive to Google Drive for their team. The goal is to get teams to move even a portion of their files in Google, with the hope that it would inspire additional teachers within the team to embrace Google Drive. Ideally, this team would then interact with additional teams, and it would simply continue to spread.

my iPad is dead and I don't have a charger

Allyson Hornseth, high school medium

A dead iPad can lead to missed or distracted class time. Additionally, if there is an available charger, students will often sit apart from the class, along a wall, to charge the iPad. There was an original meeting between the idea champion and the design team members to discuss the problem and original idea that led to some initial research of chargers. About a month later, there was an idea workshop to discuss a prototype for testing, which led to a plan of having 2-3 teachers with some form of charging options in their classrooms and to ultimately provide feedback regarding the pilot. With the prototype set, two pairs of chargers, along with lightning cables, were ordered to be utilized from mid-April through the end of the school year.



Members of the Minnetonka High School Student Innovation Team visit General Mills

big ideas

Since 2011, Minnetonka Public Schools has embraced an era of Innovation Strategic Planning. During the past seven years, Minnetonka has launched six high-level strategic initiatives that all started as “big ideas” from the Hunt.

less herding and more learning

Pam Wertjes, elementary big

How we might scaffold kindergarten support the first six weeks of school so students’ social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs are more effectively met? A prototype is now built and set to begin at the start of the 2018-19 academic school year. The prototype will include looking at the following areas: assessment days, first two days of kindergarten and the first full five-day week, teacher/goals and responsibilities.



big ideas

early support

Sue Adams, elementary big

How might we better support the mental wellness of our students and their families? It was decided to create webinars offering information about mental wellness support. This idea is still in development.

student support intervention paraprofessional

Talia Lehman, elementary big

The prototype was developed and we identified possible students and paraprofessional. Talia is in the final steps of getting permission from families for student participation and securing staffing for the program.

MMW PE

Mary Schafer, middle school big

The middle school gyms are lacking a sound system and projectors. Right now, we have a stereo system that is operated from another room, so the teacher has to leave the class to turn it on and off, and they do not always work properly. We currently are using an old boom box on a cart. Also, when we would like to use a projector in class, we have to have a cart with cords. We only have one cart for four PE teachers, so we have to share the projector. How might we provide video technology to enhance the PE experience? Since the idea went into the Hunt (over the past three years), the idea itself has been explored a lot

of different ways. This year, for our lean prototype, we tested borrowing a TV on a cart. It was a successful test. Students were given opportunities to try different activities such as yoga and meditation opportunities and P90X training. From that successful test, the tech department supported the reallocation of a TV on a cart to the MMW PE team. They have been using them successfully since then.

go climb!

Originally submitted by Mary Schafer

At MMW, we have an awesome climbing wall, but our equipment is old and can no longer be used. We would love to get new rock climbing equipment to use for our rock climbing wall. This would help us add a new innovative unit to our curriculum!

How might we evaluate the equipment used in our schools to ensure it's up to date? A survey was sent out to specific personnel to gather their feedback on how might the district be more supportive of their work. The feedback received help to narrow down the area of focus for this idea. The idea is still currently in motion.

creating INSIDE the space— a multi-purpose performance space for MME

Liz McAllister, middle school big

MME needs a performance space to house all the performance- and arts-related classes that occur before, during and after school during the school year. A Performing Arts Wing connected to MME would house all the musicals, concerts and some classes. The space would consist of a theatre as well as classrooms for choir, drama, painting and drawing and creative writing. The space would be used daily both during and after school, and during the summer months could house arts summer camps. How might we improve emotions in regards to the performance arts space? A survey was sent to specific personnel that use the Annex throughout the school year. The results are to be determined. This idea is still currently in motion.

brightening our students with solar

Charlie Swanson, middle school big

Charlie is passionate about sustainability and reducing our impact on the environment. His idea combined the use of solar energy in our district with authentic, real-world learning opportunities for his students. Ultimately, the problem was defined as: how might we provide students authentic, real-world learning experiences with renewable energy? A small team met after the workshop to discuss possible prototypes and came up with a solar-powered, student-designed iPad/phone charging station. The station would be built by students,

possibly in an after school club or as an in-class STEM or science project. The team envisioned solar panels outside the lunchroom, connected to the station set up inside for student use during lunch. All students can benefit from the utilitarian aspect of a phone-charging station, interested students could benefit from the process of designing something useful with renewable energy, and the project could increase student awareness of renewable energy sources. In addition, classes such as sixth-grade science could engage with the panels for their unit on variables. Currently, we are looking for interested teachers and/or students to lead the project.

vertical alignment TOSAs

Matt Breen, high school big

Since the math department at the high school began moving away from textbooks, we started hearing more concerns and conversations around the vertical alignment. This then spread to the middle school/high school alignment and to other departments. Ultimately, we landed on a general statement: “How might we provide support in vertically aligning curriculum across levels?” Since the workshop, there was an empathy meeting with the idea champion and a couple of interested teachers from other departments followed by an idea workshop with teachers, department chairs, and administrators. The meeting led to a great deal of conversation regarding templates for teachers to both follow and complete when working on vertical alignment within their disciplines. At this point, there is one trio of world language

teachers piloting these templates, with the hope of getting two more teams into the process before next school year.

narrowing the skills gap

Brad Eby, high school big

The problem is the skills gap that currently exists in our country. There are millions of jobs that are available to people but we do not have people with the skills to do those jobs. Many times these jobs are looked at as a consolation prize or that going to a vocational school is not as good. There is a need to show students that working in the trades industry is a great way to make a living if you are doing something that you enjoy. With these concerns in mind, the idea workshop led to the following

“how might we” statement: Promote and value vocational careers by developing educational and real-world experiences and to support (teaching/informing/connecting) students by connecting them to high-impact career side traditional 2/4 year model. Conversations both before and at the workshop centered on ways to better promote careers in the trades. The original idea, to this end, from the workshop was a career fair, which has since been determined by the idea champion and his department colleagues to not be the ideal plan. Instead, the conversation has shifted to having a panel of people either working in the trades and/or a vocational school. This panel would run earlier in the school year and would include required attendance from certain classes while

English Language Arts	Quarter	Q1				
	Week	1	2	3	4	5
English 12	Unit Name	Unit Plan is linked to this doc here			Unit #2 is here, but only 2 weeks	
	Content Standards	Standards are noted here (i.e. ELA 12.2, etc.)				
	Framework	ID dimensions and level (i.e. Creativity L2, etc.)				
	Essential Question	What is truth?				
	Skill Development	In addition to standards, what is skill focus?				
	Content Integration	Link here to other content area units				
	Assessment Data	Link here to common assessment trend data				
AP Comp	Unit Name					
	Content Standards					
	Framework					
	Essential Question					
	Skill Development					
IB Lang A1	Unit Name					
	Content Standards					
	Framework					
	Essential Question					
	Skill Development					

vertical alignment TOSAs

also being open to the rest of the student population. Additionally, there is a desire to have open pizza lunches intended to get students to drop-in over the lunch hour to take part in a discussion centered on these jobs and skill sets.

LIGHT

Laura Herbst & Kelley Mosiman
high school big

We have so many terrific opportunities for students to extend their learning beyond the six-period day, whether it be Arts, Activities, Athletics or more Academics. What's tricky for students is fitting it all in and maintaining a healthy balance. Just like in life sometimes students have to make choices, but we believe that as a building we can help facilitate their participation in areas of interest and support them in finding that crucial balance. Also, many students are unable to take advantage of the plethora of opportunities at MHS due to various issues such as transportation, scheduling, conflicts with other activities, etc.

We see LIGHT as a way of mitigating some of these barriers for many of our students, and opening up accessibility to opportunities. During the idea workshop, ways to utilize this additional time were pulled

back, resulting in a "how might we" statement that focused simply on providing students an opportunity to feel increased ownership over their time within the 8 a.m.-2:40 p.m. school day. This would be accomplished by starting 30-40 minutes later on a non-MAST day and having teachers or resource rooms available during that time. Since the workshop, the decision was made to maintain our schedule this school year, which resulted in a debate about making 2-4 MAST Wednesdays this year "open MAST" opportunities versus just looking ahead to next year. It was decided that MAST is already a positive opportunity for certain students that we do not want to negatively affect. Thus, the plan moving forward is to allocate a Friday each month next school year to "open MAST" opportunities where students will have the 30-40 minutes to receive extra help or potentially partake in activities or meetings that are generally held outside of the school day.



Virtual Learning through Google Hangout, an elementary small idea



Administrators practice human-centered design principles during a summer retreat

design for learning

Nicole Snedden, District Innovation Coordinator

“It’s not about coming up with the ‘right’ idea, it’s about generating the broadest range of possibilities.”

*Melanie Mozingo
Art + Design Educator at MHS
and the VANTAGE program*



In 2014, Idea Champion Nicole Snedden, who was at the time a fifth-grade teacher, submitted the following proposal into the Big Hunt for Ideas.

What if students had a voice in solving problems in our schools and creating new styles of classrooms? We offer many unique opportunities for students in Minnetonka, but what if our students could design, research, collaborate and create a 21st century classroom; one that is built and designed by the students and pushes the boundaries of what we consider “a typical classroom” in our society today? What if students could do more—take their learning and apply it to the real world? In this idea, students would partner with local professionals in the fields of: Architecture, Design, Science, Furniture Design and Production, Art, Music, and

what makes the “ideal” learning environment?

Technology, and build a model 21st century classroom. We would also look to local companies, businesses, and the community in the area for sponsorship and support in building this classroom model.

In Year 1 of this project (2014-2015), this idea was tested on a small scale, with five teachers at one elementary school piloting a variety of furniture options and engaging in the Human-Centered Design Process. Through this process, teachers engaged students and other staff in the conversation of what makes the “ideal” learning environment and how can we make “hacks” or low cost-no cost changes to our spaces. This included both furniture and non-furniture changes. Metrics the first year were small and based mostly on student surveys. As this grassroots movement evolved over the course of the past four years, more specific metrics both quantitative and qualitative in nature were developed.

These currently include:

- Student Surveys
- Staff Surveys
- Interviews
- Professional Development Trainings
- Design for Learning Cohort Participants at various grade levels
- Research conducted by the University of Minnesota on how Design for Learning has impacted student engagement and teacher instruction

- Design for Learning Schoology Group Members
- Number of Design for Learning Applicants each year (62 total)
- Number of spaces districtwide that have undergone space changes

This idea was scaled Year 2 (2015-16), when an Advisory Board was created, making up the following leaders in the district: Teacher representatives from each site (10 total), the Idea Champion/Project Leader, Associate Superintendent, Executive Director of Finance, Executive Director of Technology, Director of Teacher Development, High School Principal, Coordinator of Purchasing, Executive Director of Minnetonka Foundation and the Executive Director of Buildings & Grounds. This team created an application process that is still being used, where teachers and staff across the district could apply for funding to make innovative changes to their space. Teachers requesting funds had to first engage in the Human Centered Design Process and essentially share their unique story of space challenges and what changes they would like to make. This project is currently is Year 4 (2017-18). Further, as Design for Learning made gains in the district, the Human-Centered Design Process being used also evolved into other areas in the district such as innovation, curriculum, processes and tools and systems.

Nicole Snedden is currently the Innovation Coordinator in the Minnetonka Public Schools and still leads this Innovation Project.

summer academy

MCEC

“The class was fantastic. My daughter learned a ton and loved every minute of it!”

— parent
kitchen chemistry class



The Minnetonka Community Education Summer Academy started in 2014 after being selected as a Big Idea through the Hunt. In the beginning, there was a greater focus on middle school camps, including Filmmaking, Girls Get IT and the Great Debate.

Over the past four years, MCE has added High Potential camps that allow Minnetonka students to develop their interests in photography, filmmaking, food chemistry, programming and mathematical art, just to name a few!

The High Potential camps have allowed students to participate in field trips to the Weisman Art Museum, the Walker Art Center, the University of Minnesota Design Lab, Mill City Museum and more.

MCE summer academy

For summer 2018, MCE summer academy will offer seven of the most popular courses:

- Cracking the Code:
HP Crypto Camp
- Filmmaking
- History & Culture in the City
- Science in the City
- Tech Camp
- The Great Debate
- Tour of the Arts Camp

This year, within two weeks of opening registration, Tech Camp had 36 enrollments.



design for learning awards

Creating a VISION around learning spaces means giving up the idea of the traditional classroom and embracing the idea that *dynamic spaces* can be changed to meet student needs, rearranged to suit the lessons of the day, and designed to encourage collaboration—a 21st Century skill students need to be successful.



Ali Wachutka, Navigator Teacher at Scenic Heights Elementary, has been a strong advocate for Design for Learning and empowering students and staff to rethink their learning spaces. A creative designer herself, she is always looking for ways to “hack” her space or invite her students into the conversation of how they learn best.

Ali demonstrates her strong leadership skills with her own students and colleagues. Ali has supported learning space changes at Scenic Heights for several years and has even written grants that enhance common learning spaces at her site. Ali is positive, dedicated to her students and their learning and is a true innovator. She is well deserving of this award and continues to be a resource to others district-wide in this grassroots movement.





julie baeb & lisa reed

Julie Baeb and Lisa Reed have played an integral role in the success of Design for Learning over the past four years. Their passion for empowering teachers, students and the community to transform teaching and learning through the design of the learning environment is contagious.

Two years ago, these women started a Design for Learning Cohort, where they support staff in the Human Centered Design process and help teachers problem solve and “hack” their learning spaces. They are both well respected as leaders in Human-Centered Design and Innovation district-wide.



eric anderson

Eric Anderson, ATS&R Architect, has been a key partner in the success and evolution of Design for Learning from the beginning (2014). Eric has worked directly with students, helping them use charrettes as a way to creatively rethink their space. He has offered staff development support by bringing in his team of architects and designers to train the Design for Learning Advisory Board on what it means to create a *vision* around learning spaces. He has also brought his passion and skill set to individual teachers in the district by offering one-on-one support on how they might “hack” or redesign their learning spaces to best fit students’ needs. On a personal note, Eric is a natural teacher who brings a sense of inspiration to those he works with. We have been so fortunate to have him partner with us.

“We are not creating the classrooms of the future but rather inspiring the designers of the future.”

–Eric Schneider, Associate Superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools

VANTAGE

awards

It may be hard to imagine, but the VANTAGE program was Minnetonka's first Idea Hunt's Big Idea. Chris Pears and Brent Veninga were working as social studies teachers back in 2011-12 when they sat together at lunch and envisioned a way to make the MHS student experience more impactful and meaningful for students. The rest, as they say, is history.

VANTAGE has expanded to serve more than 300 students in six different profession-based strands.



priscilla trinh, student

Priscilla is a quiet leader and one of VANTAGE's biggest champions. Her passion for the program and consistent willingness to participate in events goes above and beyond. She is a great role model, leader and enthusiastic learner.

"VANTAGE has not only enlightened me, but affirmed all I could have hoped for and more," says Priscilla. "Contrary to the business-like portrayal of this program, my strand (Global Food Sustainability: Economics and the Environment) has been thrilling and interdisciplinary. Through a multitude of mini-research projects on topics such as Food Insecurity: USA vs. Madagascar, or labs simulating climate change, I have been exposed to many social issues and am constantly in the process of discovering more. I would encourage others to join this program if they are looking to improve their presentation skills or are open to collaboration. Before VANTAGE, I was a notoriously solo worker; but now, I have sincerely embraced my group work. Plus, what could go wrong with frequent field trips and interaction with dedicated adults and peers?"



stephanie lolich, instructor

Stephanie Lolich has been instrumental in the success of the VANTAGE program. She is constantly raising the level of aspiration for everyone that surrounds her and incites our students to achieve things they never dreamed possible. She is a tireless leader in VANTAGE's Global Business strand and a dominating force co-leading DECA. Stephanie embodies the values of innovation at Minnetonka. She approaches every situation with contagious energy by always asking, "How can we do this better?" Her results speak for themselves. Students who participated in VANTAGE's Shark Tank event went on to place first and second at the St. Thomas Business Plan competition for the last three years in a row. The Minnetonka DECA team won almost twice the number of medals as the second-place school at DECA regionals. 30 Minnetonka students will be traveling to Atlanta, Georgia, for DECA Internationals. We are grateful for Stephanie's leadership and ability to foster a great culture at VANTAGE. We would not be where we are without her commitment to our program.



tim meester, community

Tim Meester, Senior Director of Procurement and Sustainability at Best Buy, has been one of the biggest believers and advocates of VANTAGE. In the early days, Tim traveled to Overland Park, Kansas, to visit the Blue Valley CAPS program for the Summer Huddle. He volunteered as a guest instructor, mentor, project sponsor, competition judge, advisory board member and an all-around champion of the program. He has connected VANTAGE to his network for guest instruction, industry partners and mentors. We have Tim to thank for getting Best Buy on board for an official endorsement of the VANTAGE program.

A cutting-edge program like VANTAGE redefines the student experience. It takes a unique kind of vision to contribute time to programs like ours. This is where Tim has made the largest impact. He has leaned-in on a level that rises above and beyond a typical volunteer. We are grateful for community members like Tim who are committed to helping us succeed.

Tonka Online awards

Submitted as a Big Idea in 2013 by math teacher Jim Donald, District staff have developed a supplemental online learning program called Tonka Online that provides high-quality virtual courses to Minnetonka students and others throughout the state.

During the summer of 2014, Tonka Online successfully launched its first fully online course, Lifetime Fitness PE, with an enrollment of 42 students. Enrollment grew to 185 in 2014-15 and reached nearly 600 for 2015-16, the same year the District earned full program approval from NCAA and was granted official state online-provider status from the Minnesota Department of Education.



annika svendsen, student

Annika demonstrates many strengths as an online student in her English 12 course this semester. Annika took the course online to get a bit more flexibility in her schedule and has done an excellent job balancing the demands of the course with the rest of her life.

Annika is typically one of the first students to complete the material in the course. Her insightful discussion posts and observant essays are emblematic of the type of introspective thinking Annika demonstrates routinely in Online English. After interviewing her teacher it became evident that Annika is well respected and her ideas are appreciated in the course.



TONKAONLINE



mary hedstrom, instructor

Mary Hedstrom, English 12 Online instructor, developed one of the first Tonka Online courses at the beginning of the program and has continued to show innovation, dedication, and enthusiasm for online instruction and learning.

Her energy is carried through virtual space to her students in the ways she makes supportive comments and encourages their writing. She is always ready to reply to a student question or give tips for improvement. Students know if they take an online course with Mary they will be participating in a lively community of learning that will push them to do their best work. Mary believes in the innovative teaching made possible online. She advocated for the program of her own will and continues to support the ideals of online learning for students and other teachers, giving them a great example to believe in and help others realize the power of online learning.



jeff plaman, MDE

Jeff Plaman, Online and Digital Learning Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), is not only a dynamic person, but a dynamic community supporter of education innovation and Tonka Online. Jeff has endless energy to explore, and encourage others to explore, online learning potential. Jeff continues to be very involved in innovative online learning practices and sharing those with other educators across the state.

Last fall, Jeff co-led one of our staff trainings for online teachers. During the training he was able to challenge and encourage new thinking about engagement in online courses. Jeff reinforced many of our online best practices and worked with us to think of some next steps including innovative ways for students to become collaborators in their own and other's learning online. We look forward to a continued partnership in innovation with Jeff as we move ahead with our program.

Tonka Coders & Makers awards

Computer coding in Minnetonka schools begins in Kindergarten and culminates with advanced programming classes in high school. The Hub maker spaces, supported through a Minnetonka Foundation endowment, provide activities that support the fundamentals of computer science and engineering.



meiling mathur

Meiling Mathur, a seventh-grade student at Minnetonka Middle School West, defines excellence in Tonka Codes as a student. Meiling not only has an interest in and knack for programming, she also has a passion for developing for a cause.

Meiling's work sets the bar high for other students and she is always willing to lend a hand to help others achieve at higher levels. Her involvement in STEM, Tonka Online, and MMW Coders Club has paid off as her knowledge in the area of computer science continues to grow and her projects excel. The future is bright, with Meiling Mathur creating it!





tarah cummings

Tarah Cummings, second- and third-grade Navigator teacher at Excelsior Elementary, has been a site representative for Tonka Codes since the beginning of the program. She has a passion for bringing an understanding of computer science to our elementary classrooms.

As a Tonka Codes site representative, Tarah works to support her teachers and the students at Excelsior with coding. Tarah immerses herself in her work and has also taken on new initiatives, such as The Hub. She tackles each program with enthusiasm and excitement. Tarah Cummings defines excellence in Tonka Codes as a staff member.



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Investing in Innovation

Minnetonka Foundation

The Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation has been an integral part of moving the Tonka Codes initiative to the next level.

In 2017, as part of its latest endowment project, Minnetonka Public Schools Foundation gained approval to enhance materials for the Tonka Codes curricular program through maker-based learning K-8. With a financial commitment and much research and development, The Hub—portable closets with maker space activities—was born.

The vision for and implementation of The Hub demonstrates the Foundation's commitment to the success of our students through engaging, meaningful and hands-on experiences provided by The Hub.



Minnetonka Research awards

Minnetonka Research began as a Big Idea several years ago and opened its doors in fall 2016 to students eager to explore the challenges and rewards of authentic research based on their own questions and interests. In part due to the generous support from experts and organizations around the world (equipment, mentorship, knowledge sharing), our students are excelling and being recognized at the state and national level. In 2018-19, more than 70 students in grades 10-12 will embark—or continue—on this incredible journey.



In her first year in the program, Emily developed a research project that continuously pushed her to learn new skills. She learned many lab techniques for her project on the genes responsible for *C. elegans* worms' lifespan. The most notable accomplishments for Emily, however, are beyond the classroom learning goals. Emily taught herself and many classmates proper techniques in the lab, advocated for others and their project and never bat an eye at a challenge. Whether it is the Twin Cities Regional Science Fair, the Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair, or presenting her work at the University of Minnesota, Emily can do it. These challenges have helped Emily learn about herself and to truly set herself apart from her peers as a standout Minnetonka Research student.





cris vandriel

Cris is an integral part of our Minnetonka Research program and team as our research lab paraprofessional. She has developed strong relationships with students, is responsive to all of our needs, and always go above and beyond. She has far exceeded our expectations this year. She helps our program succeed by helping us with a variety of different items in the lab. Her responsibilities include maintaining and calibrating equipment, assisting with orders, developing relationships with a variety of different vendors, keeping track of inventory, assisting students in lab techniques and anything else she notices that we need. She is a self-starter and knows what things need to be done in order to help the students, the teachers and the program be successful. The large growth and success of the program is largely a testament to her support and teamwork.



fredarla miller

Fredarla “Freddie” Miller, University of Minnesota (UMN), is one of our outstanding Minnetonka Research mentors—not mentoring just one student, but more than 10. She continually surprises the students with the timeliness and depth of her responses to their inquiries. She doesn’t just give students answers, but points them to additional resources to explore. Freddie has supported our students via email and she has invited students to her lab to demonstrate techniques. She has also come to Minnetonka High School for an entire day at a time, making herself available to all students who may have questions. She has been an advocate for our students and program in many ways. She actively recruits others to consider being a Minnetonka Research mentor. This spring, Freddie invited our students to present their research to graduate students, postdocs, and principal investigators at the April MicrobeTech Spring 2018 BioTechnology Institute at UMN. She has provided students and staff with support and mentorship and has proven to be an invaluable asset to the Minnetonka Research program.

student innovation team awards

Minnetonka High School

Now in its second year, students at MHS, MME and MMW are participating on Student Innovation Teams with the goal of learning human-centered design principles to solve problems.

Under the direction of District and industry innovation leaders, students are learning how to engage in their own innovation projects and lend their voice as a force for positive change in their respective schools.



anna sagrillo

Anna Sagrillo, sophomore at Minnetonka High School, portrays the characteristics of a strong and dedicated student leader. In her first year on the Student Innovation Team and as a freshman, Anna collaborated with a group of peers and staff members on a project that involved keeping students safe—looking to put a crosswalk in near the high school. Anna not only ideated on possible solutions, but spoke with city leaders to come up with creative ideas. This year as a sophomore, Anna has led her team “The Dairy Predicament” in a design challenge given to them from local US food company, General Mills. Anna is poised, well spoken, humble and caring. She is not afraid of a challenge and truly is a growing innovator, one who is well deserving of this award.

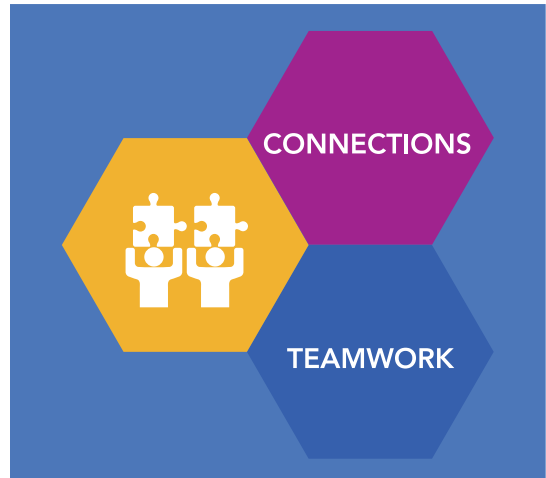


kayleigh vranish

Kayleigh Vranish, Minnetonka High School Office Assistant, is always positive, helpful and willing to jump in and assist with anything our students need.

Kayleigh has helped the Student Innovation Team all year with organizing events, managing room set up, ordering supplies, and ensuring that catering was in place and on time before students arrived for early-morning meetings.

She has been instrumental in planning transportation and logistics for student visits to General Mills. We are grateful for her support.



janet sylvester

Janet Sylvester, General Mills In Store Design Team Continuous Improvement Manager and Minnetonka parent, is a powerful advocate for this year's Student Innovators and well deserving of this Award. In the fall of 2017, after reading two articles in the Minnetonka Schools Annual Report on Human Centered Design and Student Innovation Teams, Janet reached out to Innovation Coordinator Nicole Snedden. Janet shared how she wanted to give praise to "championing such a great cause and being inspired by the words of the student innovators." Janet went on to propose a unique and exciting opportunity for the high school Student Innovation Team to share with her team the great work they were doing with Human Centered Design and, in return, students would also have an opportunity to learn more about General Mills, the innovative work they were doing and collaborate with them on a real Design Challenge. A partnership was formed and students have been engaged in meaningful and authentic learning opportunities working with General Mills.

student innovation teams

Minnetonka Middle School East



ava chen

Ava Chen, MME eighth grader, has wholeheartedly embraced Human Centered Design through her involvement in MME's Student Innovations team. Ava, along with other eighth-grade peers, led their team through a very difficult design challenge in order to affect change at MME. Ava's dedication to her team and school was evident by the time and heart she committed to the teams' solution video. It is an honor to present Ava with a student Excellence in Innovation award.



amy altenburg

Amy Altenburg, Teacher Instructional Coach and d.Team member, has been integral to the success of our MME Student Innovation Team. Amy supported the students throughout the year, attending every meeting, facilitating a small group, and always willing to lend a hand where needed. This was our inaugural year, guiding students through the unpredictable process of design thinking and innovation. Amy jumped in without hesitation, gave her small group the guidance and support they needed to be successful, and did so with warmth and grace.

Minnetonka Middle School West



kayla stevenson

Kayla has fully embraced the process of Human Centered Design and has become an invested member of the West Innovation Student Hackers (WISH) Team. Kayla leverages her drawing skills to develop ideas for the team. She shares her ideas and builds upon others as we work toward finding solutions to make MMW a better place. She has grown to actively share her voice with the larger group and her insight in discussing problems/opportunities. We are lucky to have Kayla on our MMW WISH Team.



dr. paula hoff

Dr. Hoff has been an integral part of the WISH Team (West Innovation Student Hackers). She partnered with the teacher leads to develop a plan to bring this team to fruition, allowing for Human-Centered Design Training, several 1/2 day sessions for the students to share empathy, define problems/opportunities, ideate, build prototypes/pitch and a test. Paula was actively involved in all aspects of the process from planning for the student sessions to working with student teams to develop their ideas/prototypes. Paula embraces the Human Centered Design process and welcomes the student perspective in planning to make MMW a better place.



Big changes coming!

Hunt for Big Ideas • Fall 2018
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Stay tuned!



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